Synopsis

On

Representation of Mumbai in select Indian English Fiction : A Comparative Study

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Background of Research Study

Cities are the sites of complex and varied global and local interconnections that have the capability to generate diverse economic, social, political forms and spaces. Cities cannot be perceived in one perspective, and thus, have to be concluded with various underlining themes and notions that defines its existence. Cities must be understood from a variety of perspectives that adhere to the social, cultural, economic and political constructs (Bridge and Watson, 2002). Such an understanding will aid in the absolvent of the pressing issues that plague the development of the current city or state (Niall, 2005). The idea of a city or a state in not just limited to its geographical boundaries, rather, it is defined by the collective approach of the population which reflects the psychological state of the city. Thus, the idea of identity of the city and those of its people is trapped in a vicious cycle, wherein, one impacts the other in equal measure (Vincent, 2012).

Cities are defined by its buildings, roads, infrastructure and various materialistic aspects; however, cities, in an equal measure, also reflect the intricacies that occur within their geographical realm. Such intricacies are often reflected in literature. The city is a central theme in modernist literature. Numerous novels and poems reflect the ways in which cities generate states of shock, exhilaration, alienation, anonymity, confusion or thrill (Mullin, 2016). Cities are manifested with collective identity that carefully manoeuvres the personality of an individual or a collective group. Individuals are seemingly impacted by the prevailing sense of the psychology that the cities are inculcated with (Elizabeth, 2014).

Ever since the rise of the metropolis (19^{th} century), the cities have played an important role in the literature, not just as an antecedent setting but as a crucial aspect. The representation of city in literature is not a mere reflection, but is also a reflection on the city. This double reflection (Wesselman, 2012), as mentioned above in the context of a vicious cycle, is important for the proposed study for assessing the representation of Mumbai in Indian English fiction novels (Lewis, 2014).

Raban (2008) asserted that cities are comprised of two competing versions: “the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps, in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture”. For

Mumbai, the idea of soft city has dominated the historical and political rhetoric without excessively acknowledging the narrative artifice implied in the identity of the city. Prakash (2010) pursued a historical investigation of Mumbai and argued that deeply flawed “narratives of change” about “the rise and fall of the city” dominate textual depictions of it: “Pick up recent novels on the city, read nonfiction writings, turn the pages in newspaper and magazine files, talk to people, and you will be confronted with a story that purports to tell us what the city was as Bombay and what it has become as Mumbai” (Prasad, 2001).

Thus, the novels selected for analysing the representation of Mumbai are: Nacropolis, Ravan & Eddie: The Extras, Q&A: novel, Sacred Games, and Lost Flamingos of Bombay. All these novels are part of contemporary literature and explicitly describe the state of Mumbai and signify certain themes around which the life of the protagonist revolves. These themes are in congruence with the psychology of the state, and thus, they have been chosen for this proposed study.

Rationale of the Proposed Study

The world of the novel is made up of locations and settings, arenas and boundaries, perspectives and horizons. Different places are imagined, perceived, and settled in by the protagonist of the novels, by the author and is correspondingly lived by the readers (Rai, 2005). Therefore, different novels present themselves with different realms, experiences, and knowledge of the geography they are entailed with. Resonating with this thought, these geographies and locations are harmonised with varied worldly awareness and experience, from circumscribed routines to linear notions of progress or transformation (Barrell, 1982; Said, 1989). Cities are known to generate states of shock, exhilaration, alienation, anonymity, confusion or thrill that further generates various notions of the society and define the personality of the individual. According to Levy (1978), the role of a city in a novel moves from the "setting for the action to an active component of the action". Mumbai as a state has been the focal point for many changes that have developed the country of India, by large. Thus, the idea of Mumbai as central point which impacts and influences the characters in a novel is palpable and has been implemented by various authors. The relation between the characters and the state of Mumbai, particularly Mumbai, is showcased as the relation that transcends evolves with time, wherein, both the variables are impacted by the action of one another. The buildings in Mumbai symbolised ideas, such as, patriotism, religious identity

and regal power. Soon, after decolonisation, the life in the urban cities of Mumbai were constantly altering, which is clearly reflected in various works of the selected authors (Minerva 2014).

Thus, in this study, the representation of Mumbai as reflected in the works of the selected authors is analysed. The main purpose of this study is to understand how the state generates various notions of the society and define the personality of the individual. The idea of the isolated self, the one involved in drugs and mafia, and the one that lives within the enchanting tales of sprawling chawls, are various themes that are generated in the works of the selected authors post decolonisation. Thus, this study represents Mumbai as a state that highlighted the political turmoil, drugs and mafia menace and the chawls. The current study has selected the novels of the five authors as it reflects the various parts of the Mumbai life, not the limited portrayal of glam and glitter. The selected novels are a deep probe into the heart of Mumbai and brings out the nook and corner of the city to the readers.

Review of Literature

Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis* is set in Mumbai and explores the opium dens and brothels with the help of the protagonist. According to Jeet, "Mumbai mingles with people, creates problems for people, provides pleasure to the people, and thrashes people". The novel traverses through the smoke alley of Mumbai's drug world. Mumbai is as the central theme of the novel, and presents a discerning image of the city with the help of the characters, their relationships, behaviours and the style of living (Sharma, 2016).

Kiran Nagarkar's *Ravan and Eddie: The Extras*, set in Mazgaon, Mumbai explores the life of two young boys, Ravan and Eddie and their struggle to succeed in life. The grim world of the Mazgaon chawl, the beating heart of the lower middle-class Bombay, the dejection and disappointment of life is brought forth through the eyes of the two young protagonists. Sarcastic, witty and funny; the novel explores the illegal bars, the Bhendi Bazar, brothels, Mafia and underworld in Mumbai. Nagarkar centralises on the wold of Bollywood and the multi-cultural setting of the chawls of Mumbai (Yatnalli, 2016).

Vikas Swarup's *Q & A: A Novel*, explores the life of Ram which takes a sudden curve when he enters in a quiz show. Through the life story of Ram, Swarup attempts to portray the Indian society; the city of Mumbai significantly. The harsh reality on the other side of the glitter and glam

of Mumbai; the underworld mafia that cripples and blinds children, prostitution of young children, the pompous rich etc. is a journeyfrom ‘farce to melodrama to fairy-tale’. The inner conflicts of the protagonist is represented so as to portray the common man in India. The stereotypicalview of the world on the less fortunate is presented by Swarup in Q & A (Gondhalli, 2015).

Vikram Chandra’s *Sacred Games* invites the readers into the world of the rich, the powerful and the corrupted of Mumbai. Drawing deeper into the life of Sartaj Singh, the protagonist and Ganesh Gaitonde, the most wanted underworld gangster; Chandra brings forth the mafia wars and the gang conflicts that shaped the rough edges of the Mumbai city. A story of friendship, betrayal and violence; *Sacred Games* talks about the dark side of the astonishing city. The novel is not limited to the theme of the dark sides of the city of Mumbai but also peeks into exploring the love life of a policeman, the dreams of a young woman in a big city, political chaos, mass murder and emotional trauma, sufferings of women etc. (Rao, 2015).

Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghvi’s *Lost Flamingos of Bombay*is the story of Karan Seth, a photographer who has come to Mumbai to try his luck. The city of Mumbai quickly engulfs Karan with its glam and glitter, providing Karan with a falsified sense of security. A depiction of the Fitzgeraldian world of sex, crime and confusion, Shanghvi portrays the interconnected world of love and politics in the contemporary India. Descried as an intrinsic exploration of the contemporary Mumbai, the novel represents the beauty and the ugliness of the city of Mumbai (Kirkus, 2010).

Research Gap

Despite the prevalence of the themes of cities in the literature following the era of postmodernism, rare studies have been pursued along the lines of Indian English fiction. Separate studies have been conducted on the works of Jeet Thayil (Mazzarella, 2003),Kiran Nagarkar, Vikas Swarup, Vikram Chandra, and Siddharth Shanghvi; however, there hasn’t been a collective study that assesses the representation of Mumbai in the works of these selected authors. A lack of information pertaining to the writings of Siddharth Shanghvi was ascertained during the study as well.

Objectives of the Proposed Study:

1. To explore the works of Jeet Thayil in *Narcopolis is* about the dens of opium and underworld set in Mumbai.

2. To explore the work of Kiran Nagarkar as representedin *Ravan & Eddie : The Extras* as a representation of the life of the marginalised and the elevated struggle inachievingthe dreams.
3. To assess the work of Vikas Swarup as represented in *Q & A: A Novel* as a representation of the discrimination faced by the poorer section of the society by the rich and the powerful.
4. To explore the work of Vikram Chandra as represented in the *Sacred Games* and the representation ofcrime and corruption of the financial capital of India, Mumbai.
5. To study the work of Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghvi as represented in the *Lost Flamingos of Bombay* and to explore the world of crime and confusion of Bombay the impact it has on the characters' lives.

Research Methodology:

Literary works are used to entertain, to teach a moral lesson, to convey meaning, or more importantly, to make the reader aware of some aspect of the human condition. Through their work, writers creatively share their ideas and express themes that are timeless and universal. In any field of research, after recognising the meaningful research problem, for investigation and to get its reasons, some medium is required to further assess the solutions presented in the problem. The proposed study required comments and opinions of the critics and the perception of the researcher to identify the representation of Mumbai in the selected novels. Thus, the proposed research work contains following methods:

1. Content Analysis Method
2. Subjective Analysis Method
3. Library work

Data Source Used

Secondary data is used in this study, wherein the selected novels of Jeet Thayil, Kiran Nagarkar, Vikas Swarup, Vikram Chandra, and Siddharth Shanghvi were used to fulfil the objectives of the study. The study will make use of research papers and articles developed by various researchers to gather additional information pertaining to the currentstudy. The study aims to analyse different themes such as those of politics, drugs, underworld and chawls that are prevalent in the identified

novels for this study. The collected data will be evaluated by using text analysis which will augment the understanding. The study in addition, follows validation measures and ethical criteria. No false data is used and no misuse of data occurred.

Limitations of the Proposed Study

- The proposed study is limited to the works of Jeet Thayil, Kiran Nagarkar, Vikas Swarup, Vikram Chandra, and Siddharth Shanghvi.
- The study considers only English fiction authors penned by Indian writers and involves the novels of postcolonial period.
- Out of the various themes that can be deciphered in the selected novels, the themes of political turmoil, drugs and mafia, and life within the chawls is considered.

Significance of the Study

An extensive review of literature has been pursued to obtain the required data towards the research topic. ‘Representation of Mumbai in Indian English Fiction’ aims to focus on the works of the selected authors and understand their depiction of the state within the context of their novel. This research is inclusive of the perception of the state and its influence on both the author and the protagonist of the novel. There is an unexplainable collaboration between the city and the worldly awareness that leads to material, social, cultural, mental and societal transformation. The political realm, and intrinsic characteristics of state bring forth the advent of modernisation in a given society and highlight its process of urbanisation. However, despite such a relevance of city in a novel, there have been rare studies that focus on the geographical realm of a literature work, particularly in the context of Mumbai. Thus, this study will be crucial for researchers further pursuing this arena of literature and can also be used for pedagogical purposes.

Tentative Chapterization

Chapter - 1: Introduction

In the first chapter, the research scholar will shed light on abrief history of Indian fiction novels, along with an introduction into the Indian English Writers. By focusing on these two aspects, the researcher attempts to explore the life and works of the selected five authors, with an elevated focus on the writings style adopted by the authors. By exploring these elements, the researcher can develop an understanding on the style and format adopted by Indian English writers in writing about India. The authors' depiction of India will be compared and contrasted.

Chapter - 2: Representation of Cities in Literature

The research scholar will examine the development and representation of Indian cities in the novels by different authors. The researcher will explore the depiction of the cities depending upon the different cultures, rituals, setting, social and economic setting etc. Then, the researcher will focus on the representation of the Indian cities in the novels of the five selected authors of the current study. The style adopted by the authors in expressing the Indian cities will be explored, comparing it with the representation of other writers. The chapter will explore the reviews by various scholars on the novels of the selected five authors. The researcher will explore the representation of places or citiesas the central focus of the current study. A detailed explanation on the meaning and relevance of the representation of cities in the novels will be provided by the researcher to gain an understanding on the concept of the study.

Chapter -3: Representation of Mumbai in the Selected Works of Jeet Thayil, Kiran Nagarkar and Vikas Swarup.

The current chapter will provide a brief introduction on the selected works of Jeet Thayil, Kiran Nagarkar and Vikas Swarup. The novels of each author will be examined separately, with elevated focus on the depiction of the city of Mumbai. The researcher attempts to bring forth the similarities and differences in the representation of Mumbai by the selected authors. Each of the novels will be explored on the basis of the characters, the setting and the plot. Mumbai, viewed through the different eyes of the characters are brought forth.

Chapter -4: Representation of Mumbai in the Selected Works of Vikram Chandra, and Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghvi.

The current chapter will provide a brief introduction on the selected works of Vikram Chandra, and Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghvi. The novels of each author will be examined separately, with elevated focus on the depiction of the city of Mumbai. The researcher attempts to bring forth the similarities and differences in the representation of Mumbai by the selected authors. Each of the novels will be explored on the basis of the characters, the setting and the plot. Mumbai, viewed through the different eyes of the characters are brought forth.

Chapter - 5: A Comparative Study of the Representation of Mumbai in the Selected Fiction.

The current chapter attempts provides a brief introduction in the motive behind the comparative analysis of the novels. The researcher will then attempt to carry out an analysis on the representation of Mumbai in the selected novels of the five authors. As previously indicated, the comparative analysis is carried out to bring forth the similarities and the differences seen in the writing style and perspective of the authors. The researcher attempts to gather an understanding on the varied views of the authors about Mumbai. The life and story of many characters in the novels are examined.

Chapter – 6: Conclusion

Under this chapter, the researcher will review the complete study that has been conducted and provide the conclusion to the research entitled “Representation of Mumbai in Indian English Fiction”. The opinions and findings produced by various researchers will be compared and contused with the aim of reaching a conclusion. It will also discuss the scope for further studies.It will be followed by select bibliography.

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